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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

Reading as a skill permeates all curriculum areas--literature, social studies, science, mathematics, health, music, art, and physical education to some extent. Teachers should do much oral reading to young learners in particular. Pupils need to experience a wide variety of trade books at a reading center, while basal readers provide a quality framework for the teaching of reading. Teachers need to use supplementary readers as well as trade books to assist each pupil to achieve as optimally as possible in reading. Pupils also need to achieve skill in word recognition techniques. Most pupils can benefit from syllabication instruction to identify unknown words. Phonics instruction and syllabication learnings should be stressed within the framework of larger units of emphasis such as context clues. Early primary age pupils, in particular, find picture clues to be helpful in choosing a correct word in what was the unknown in reading. Teachers also need to determine the level of reading achievement in relation to the basal textbook used. The numerous problems that pupils individually may experience in reading need to be identified and solutions sought. As pupils master word attack skills, they also need to be capable of reading for diverse purposes or comprehension skills. To be a good reader stresses the ability to comprehend and understand that which has been read. (RS)

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Marlow Ediger 1994

THE READING CURRICULUM

ED 372 361

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Language arts and reading across the curriculum is certainly in vogue. Professional writers and speakers in education strongly recommend that all teachers, regardless of academic area taught, emphasize the language arts areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and word processing skills, as well as nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, gestures, and body movements. Reading is an inherent part of the language arts and yet, due to its vital importance, is treated as an entity by the writer.

Reading in the Curriculum

Reading as a skill permeates all curriculum areas be it literature, social studies, science, mathematics, health, music, art, and physical education to some extent. What should be emphasized in a quality program of reading instruction starting with young primary age pupils?

The teacher should do much oral reading to young learners in particular. Stories chosen by the teacher or recommended by pupils should be on the latters understanding level. Thus pupils need to comprehend the contents of oral reading. Otherwise the teacher's and the pupil's time is not being used wisely. Learners need to enjoy the contents of trade books read oral to them. This is one way for the pupil to build background information so that more difficult content sequentially can be understood. Then too, with the enjoyment of oral reading experiences, learners will have a desire to learn to read on their own. Later on when reading to themselves, pupils will understand subject matter better due to having the necessary background ideas that might well have come from being read to orally by the teacher. Subject matter acquired by pupils from oral reading activities provides needed content to understand new facts, concepts, and generalizations.

When reading orally to pupils, the teacher should maintain good eye contact with as many learners as possible. This indicates to the learner that quality communication is taking place. For young learners,

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it is salient that the teacher show illustrations in the story or book being read. These illustrations should be shown in context. Thus when the abstract words are read orally, the teacher shows to pupils the related illustrations. Voice inflection when reading orally is necessary so that pupils find the content presented in an interesting way. The teacher then should use proper stress, pitch, and juncture in the oral reading experience. Pupils also need to learn that content read orally has a certain sequence of ideas. The writer cannot over emphasize the importance of teachers of young children being read to orally with carefully chosen literature that is interesting, meaningful, and has perceived purpose.

Second, pupils need to experience a wide variety of trade books at a reading center. These books can be checked out readily for school and home reading. Teachers need to encourage pupils selecting books for silent reading. The trade books should be on different topics such as animal life, people of diverse nations, travel, historical fiction, bibliotherapy, biographies, and autobiographies, among others. Topics on reading from trade books should be as broad as the interests possessed by pupils. These books must be on different reading achievement levels so that each learner can benefit from materials read. If the teacher introduces selected books to learners in terms of subject matter contained therein, pupils should tend to have an inward desire to read due to interests developed. A stimulating bulletin board should also encourage pupil interest in reading. The bulletin board may have jackets from newly purchased books with a caption such as "HAVE YOU READ THESE BOOKS?" Further bulletin board ideas to stimulate pupil reading might include the following:

1. list the titles of new books with an appropriate caption.
2. show a world map and indicate several book titles that would have their setting in a specific area or region.
3. have pupil draw illustrations pertaining to books read and post these on the bulletin board.
4. encourage learners to make puppets involving characters from stories and show these to all pupils in class.

5. let pupils do bulletin board displays based on trade books read.

With quality bulletin board displays, pupils should feel motivation to do more reading. Learners must experience challenge in wanting to do more reading so that knowledge, skills, and attitudes are being developed in becoming proficient readers.

Using Basal Readers

Most teachers use basal readers published by a reputable company to teach reading to pupils. Basal readers by themselves will not automatically do the job of providing for individual reading needs of pupils. The teacher needs to use supplementary readers as well as trade books to assist each pupil to achieve as optimally as possible in reading. Basal readers, however, can provide a quality framework for the teaching of reading. The teacher needs to emphasize readiness activities before pupils are to read a given selection from the basal reader. Thus the teacher should introduce new words that pupils will meet, when reading silently or orally. These words should be printed in neat manuscript letters on the chalkboard or on a transparency. Each new word may be presented in isolation or within a given sentence. The writer prefers the latter since pupils then may see each new word in context. Generally, words are viewed in context as one reads for a specific purpose. Learners need practice at the time of word introduction to be able to identify these words later when reading silently or orally. Being able to recognize the new words in print when reading is salient. Learners then have benefited from being introduced to the new words form the chalkboard or overhead projector.

Pupils need to understand the meaning of each new word. Perhaps the meaning comes form the contextual situation of the word. The meaning then comes from the rest of the words in the sentence and their relationship to the new word being introduced. The Glossary of the basal reader should also be used to determine the meaning of unknown words. Generally the glossary provides definitions for these words as they will be used in paragraphs to be read in the basal reader. After pupils have

observed and learned to pronounce the new words as well as understand their meanings, pupils should also have adequate background information to attach meaning to what will be read. For example, if learners are to read a selection on elephants and the rain forest, they must have enough subject matter understandings to comprehend content on elephants and the rain forest. Illustrations in the basal reader as well as pictures form the teacher's own files can be used in discussions to guide learners to secure the necessary information to understand that which will be read. Next is sequence, the teacher must assist learners to establish purpose(s) for reading content. The teacher might state the purpose(s) and write these on the chalkboard. Pupils might also have developed questions for which they would like to receive information through reading. Perhaps, learners asked the questions when studying the new words as listed on the chalkboard or through the use of the overhead proctor. Questions from learners may have arisen when studying the meaning of these new words or when background subject was presented with the use of audio- visual aids. If pupils are not ready to read the purpose(s) from the chalkboard as printed by the teacher, the reasons for reading can be stated orally using meaningful language. Purpose(s) usually emphasize questions that learners need to answer. The answer(s) are secured through reading.

Following the reading of the content by pupils, there are recommendable follow up activities which reveal how much learners have comprehended form the reading experience. The following are recommended:

1. discuss answers to questions stated in the purpose by the teacher. Answers to questions raised by pupils should also be discussed.Comprehension of what has been read is vital. One reads to comprehend, not for the sake of word calling.

2. dramatize what has been read. This takes careful planning by learners with teacher guidance. Roles need to be accepted and content to be dramatized must be understood and used in dramatic activities. Dramatic experience may consist of creative drama whereby involved pupils develop script as the need arises. Pantomime involves no spoken

words but the facial expressions, gestures, and body movements tell and express that which has been acquired form reading. Formal drama empathizes learners writing the spoken parts and then using these parts for presentation to an audience.

3. Critical thinking should be stressed when pupils reveal what has been learned from reading. Here. learners analyze content in terms of being fact or opinion, accurate or inaccurate, and fantasy versus reality.

4. Creative thinking is also salient in that learners might brainstorm how the characters in the story could be different from what the author describes or how the setting of the story could be changed. Learners might develop a different plot from that written by the author or develop satire from selected portions of content read. Ridiculing of persons, however, needs to be avoided.

5. Problem solving procedures should become a part of the reading curriculum. Learners then identify a problem from the story, develop an hypothesis, test the hypothesis , and revise it if necessary.

Pupils need to achieve skill in word recognition techniques. Perhaps, the most salient skill in word recognition for young learners is phonics. Phonics instruction should not be overdone. Phonics stresses abstract content in guiding pupils to associate graphemes (symbols) with phonemes (sounds). There are very consistent grapheme- phoneme relationships within words such as ban, can, fan, man, pan, tan, and ran, among other word families. In the above listed words, each grapheme harmonizes with a phoneme. The following set of words within a family lacks rational spelling in that a grapheme does not equal a phoneme: cough, through, though, rough, trough, bough, and dough. Each of these words has an "ough" ending but each has a different pronunciation. In teaching phonics, the writer recommends the following:

1. a balanced program of word recognition techniques must be emphasized in the reading curriculum. Phonics is one approach for pupils to use in unlocking unknown words.

2. phonics due to its abstract content should not be taught for to

long a period of time at one sitting for learners. Overemphasis upon phonics instruction in one lesson may make for situations involving boredom and meaningless learning.

3. the teacher should try to start with the concrete phase of instruction when teaching phonics and then move to the semi- concrete in ongoing lessons on phonics. Thus the teacher may show a model dog when learners are learning the initial consonant sound of "d" in the word "dog." For the semi- concrete facet of learning, the teacher may show a picture of a dog to analyze the "d" sound. Additional concrete and semi-concrete materials may then be used to show other words that begin with the "d" sound such as dog, duck, door, and desk. Some words are to abstract to relate to the concrete and semi- concrete phases of teaching such as which, when, where, and what. These words will have to be taught using the abstract facet of phonics such as looking at the beginning grapheme "w" to notice consistency here in pronouncing the initial sounds of words that start with the "w" letter.

Using Syllabication to Recognize Words

Most pupils can benefit from syllabication instruction to identify unknown words. If a pupil does not recognize a word in reading, he/she may identify that word by dividing it into component parts or syllables. For example, a pupil reading the word "unknown" might perceive it to be completely new. When dividing the word into syllables, the parts have been identified previously. The prefix "un" might have been read in words such as unlike and unimportant. The learner may have also read the base or root word "known" previously in a different context. Now the pupil needs to put the prefix and base word together to make the word "unknown." There are prefixes that are vital for pupils to be able to read and understand. These prefixes are consistent in pronunciation and meaning. For example, the prefix "un" means "not." The prefix is common in words read and has the same meaning each time.

Knowledge of suffixes can be valuable for pupils to unlock unknown words in terms of pronunciation and meaning. The word "runner" has the suffix "ner." The "ner" means "one who runs."

Generally, there is an "er" suffix only, that means "one who" such as in the word "dancer" which means "one who dances." The "er" suffix is common in words and thus becomes useful for pupils to know and understand to recognize unknown words. If a learner reads the word "singer" in context and it appears to be a new word, the pupil may divide the word into two component "sing" and "er." Perhaps both syllables are understandable to the pupil and have been read before. The word "singer" then can result form the two syllables. The word "sing" tends to be a common word in the reading vocabulary of the learner. The "er" ending is common to numerous words and has a rather consistent pronunciation in the English language.

In teaching syllabication skills to pupils, the writer recommends the following:

1. important syllables should be taught to pupils as the need arises, not in isolation from context.

2. methods used in teaching syllabication should be interesting to learners. Sameness of methodology makes for boredom.

3. inductive approaches should be used whereby pupils are guided to discover the correct pronunciation and meaning of syllables.

4. learners should be given ample opportunities to determine the correct word before a teacher/ pupil intervenes with identification of that word in reading.

5. holistic procedures should be used in teaching reading. Words then are a part of a sentence and sentences are a part of a paragraph with sequential paragraphs following. Thus a word is not an isolated entity but is an inherent part of a larger unit of content.

Using Context Clues

Phonics instruction and syllabication learnings should be stressed within the framework of larger units of emphasis such as context clues. If a pupil cannot identify a word, the teacher must guide the pupil to read the words that surround the unknown. Many times, the unknown word in reading can then be identified. Too frequently, pupils do not use context clues to choose a correct word for the unknown. It is not a difficult task to

assist pupils to learn to use context clues. Pupils must do the learning as is true of all acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
The teacher's role is to provide learning activities which encourage, stimulate, and assist learners to be independent in reading. The writer believes strongly that the use of context clues in reading will work in many cases to guide learners to choose the correct word when the unknown appears to be in the offing. Learners need to put forth considerable effort in achieving skill to use context clues as well as phonics and syllabication generalizations.

The use of context clues in reading stresses holism in reading. The entire sentence then as a minimum becomes salient in identifying a word. To emphasize the use of context clues in identifying unknown words, the teacher needs to

1. encourage pupils to read the entire sentence to ascertain the correct word in reading.

2. guide learners to use phonics in initial sounds if there are too many words that fit in as far as the use of context clues is concerned. The initial consonant or vowel sound will then secure the answer as to which the correct word will be in reading as a result of using context clues.

3. assist pupils to use syllabication skills if the correct word in reading cannot be selected in context due to many meaningful possibilities which are incorrect. Thus dividing the unknown word into syllables plus the use of context clues and phonics skills should guarantee to the learner which the correct word is in the sentence. Word identification skills are complimentary, not isolated form each other.

4. stress holism in reading such as when one reads, the entire selection provides meaning and comprehension rather than isolated parts. Gestalt psychology is inherent here in that reading for wholes supplies meaning to the reader, rather than reading small segments. Gestaltists believe that individuals always look for meaning even if the parts truly would not provide that which is understandable. Individuals still take the parts to provide a whole. The whole stresses meaning in reading, not meaningless abstractions.

5. pupils should attempt the use of context clues prior to using phonics and syllabication to unlock unknown words. If unknown words are unlocked through the use of context clues, the reader will become more fluent in the skills of reading. Why? Less time is taken to read a selection if the readier identifies the unknown word through the use of context clues. Analyzing a word through the use of phonics and syllabication skills is more time consuming as compared to the use of context clues.

Using Picture Clues

Early primary age pupil, in particular, find picture clues to be helpful in choosing a correct word in what was the unknown in reading. The pictures in basal readers for early primary grade learners are large and are closely related to the surrounding printed subject matter. The illustrations serve well for the teacher to use in building background information within pupils prior to oral or silent reading. With quality background content in mind before the act of reading, the pupil will understand better that which is being read. Then too, if a pupil does not recognize a word in reading, he/she may look at the illustration on that same page and, in many cases, be able to choose the correct word for that which appeared to be an unknown word. On the intermediate grade levels, the use of picture clues to identify the unknown word tends to become less useful since the illustrations are much fewer and there is much more print on each page of the basal reader. However, even here the learner should study the picture carefully to notice if a clue exists for the unknown word. This takes only a short time to do. Learners need to become independent in attempting to identify unknown words.

Determining Reading Levels

How does the teacher ascertain the level of reading achievement in relationship to the basal textbook used? Is the text too difficult or too easy for the learner when reading content? If it is too complex, the learner will tend to become frustrated in reading. Should the basal be at a too elementary level of complexity, he/ she might become bored and

lose interest in reading. The basal reader used should be challenging enough and yet be understandable to the pupil. Readiness activities provided by the teacher such as pupils seeing the new words in print, knowing the meaning of these words, and having a purpose for reading, prior to the actual act of reading , assists each learner to be able to comprehend and understand the contents therein. These readiness experiences guide pupils to understand that which would be too complex for reading. However, any book can become too complex for the elementary age pupil.

To evaluate the reading level of the basal used for any child, the teacher may mark off one hundred running words in the textbook at the beginning of the school year and have a pupil read the contents orally to the teacher in a private setting where no other pupil can listen in to the oral reading. If a pupil can pronounce correctly 95 to 98 of the 100 words, the basal is on the reading level of the pupil providing that another condition is met. Thus, the learner needs to also answer correctly, three out of four questions developed by the teacher which covers the subject matter read. The 95 to 98 per cent of the words read correctly and the three out of four questions answered correctly are approximate and not an absolute. One can understand as the pupil pronounces fewer and fewer of the words correctly and is able to answer fewer and fewer questions correctly how this hinders learner comprehension of content read. The approach mentioned here to ascertain reading levels of individual pupils should be conducted so that pupils have not had any practice reading the content previously nor should other pupils listen in to the informal evaluation. If these precautions are not followed, the teacher cannot not determine if the basal is on the frustrational, instructional, or recreational level of reading. If a pupil can pronounce 95 to 98 per cent of the running words correctly, there still are opportunities to grow in learning new words in reading such as 2 to 5 for each 100 running words read and yet the number required here is not overwhelming.

There are standardized tests to determine reading achievement at the present level. The purpose of administering standardized tests to

determining reading levels as well as using the informal 100 running word method is to match reading levels of individual pupils with materials to be read. If a teacher can locate reading materials for each pupil which harmonize with his/her present individual levels of attainment, the reading activity for learners individually can be a truly enjoyable event. If a pupil cannot identify an adequate number of words read, he/ she will be reading at the frustrational level. Should the reading materials be too easy, the pupil might then be reading at the recreational level whereby approximately 100 out of 100 running words are identified correctly and four out of four questions covering the content read are answered correctly, without having read the subject matter previously. Recreational level of reading is done when the learner chooses a trade book and reads the contents for sheer enjoyment. Recreational reading must be encouraged by the teacher so that learners achieve positive attitudes toward reading. The instructional level provides opportunities for pupils to learn to identify new words and yet comprehension is adequate to ensure success in the reading curriculum. The frustrational level of reading makes for pupils who feel frustrated in reading and tend not to be encouraged through subject matter read.

Problems in Reading

There are numerous problems that pupils individually may experience in reading. Problem areas need identification and solutions sought.

The following kinds of errors made by pupils in oral reading will provide the teacher with selected ideas as to what to look for when learners reveal difficulties:

1. Mispronunciation of words
2. Omitting words
3. Adding words to content read
4. Not paying attention to punctuation marks
5. Hesitation on words read
6. Failure to associate graphemes with phonemes when

consistency is in evidence.

7. Too much stress placed on phonics when there is a lack of consistency between grapheme and phoneme

8. insufficient emphasis on thought units when the pupil is reading. Thus the pupil should read the sentence correctly in terms of thought units such as, "The dog/ ran for the bone." An incorrect thought unit would be the following: "The/ dog ran for/ the/ bone."

9. a lack of holism in reading. Thus the pupil reads too analytical by dividing words into component segments when the learner reveals this is not needed.

10. a stress upon holism whereby the pupil must pay more attention to parts such as words so that meaning can be attached to content read.

The teacher of reading needs to be a quality diagnose of learner difficulties in reading and assist learners individually with problems encountered. The pupil must become a proficient reader by using different word attack skills as keys to comprehend content, not ends in and of themselves.

As pupils master word attack skills, they also need to be capable of reading for diverse purposes or comprehension skills. The following are salient purposes for learners in reading content:

1. reading for important facts. Here, the pupil reads for significant specifics in a given selection regardless of the curriculum area involved. All purposes in reading must be emphasized within context, not in complete isolation.

2. reading to skim. In this situation, the learner needs to read for a precise name, date, or place deemed worthy of consideration.

3. reading to follow directions. There are numerous situations in which a learner needs to read directions carefully so that an exercise can be worked correctly by the pupil.

4. reading to develop a generalization. To generalize, a pupil must read a selection of adequate length so that the pupil can say in one sentence what has been read. Facts provided must support a strong

generalization.

5. reading for a main idea. A longer selection is read as compared to reading for achieving generalizations. Thus from an entire unit of study in any curriculum area, the learner should ultimately be able to say in one sentence that which has been read.

6. reading to think critically. Here, the learner separates and analyzes that which is correct form the incorrect, the salient from the trivial, and ideas of propaganda from the rational.

7. reading to think creatively. The learner needs to come up with unique, novel ideas when reading creatively. Thus the pupil may come up with a different ending, beginning, setting, characterization, or plot than that which is contained in the reading selection.

8. reading to solve problems. A problem solver is able to identify one or more problem areas. The problems should be questions which are rather broadly stated. Information can then be gathered in answer to the problem through reading and a multi- media approach. The content read directly related to the problem area needs to be appraised in terms of being plausible. Additional reading can be done to check the plausibility of the information. A variety of reading materials should be available to meet reading needs of involved learners.

9. reading for enjoyment. The pupil then selects materials to read based on personal interests, needs, and purposes. Quality trade books need to be in the offing so that each pupil may choose that which is personally beneficial. Sheer interest in reading is the ultimate goal here. Sustained silent reading (SSR) might be stressed here in which everyone in a classroom or the entire school at a given time reads a personally selected trade book for enjoyment.

10. reading to determine cause and effect. Thus the learner reads content from a basal or or printed materials to notice causes for effects. When determining what made for an occurrence, learners then need to find the cause or causes.

When each of the above purposes is emphasized in reading, the pupil needs to possess readiness factors to engage in each type of

purpose. For example, a skilled reader on the intermediate or higher grade level can read for any of the enumerated purposes.

In Summary

A quality reading curriculum assists each pupil to attain as optimally as possible. Appropriate reading skills are needed presently by learners to do well in school as well as to attain more optimally later in the adult world of work and recreation. The pupil must put forth much effort to become a proficient reader. The pupil needs to do the learning to become a good reader. The teacher can set the stage with appropriate readiness experiences as well as challenging ongoing learning opportunities. Pupil progress in reading needs to be diagnosed and remediation procedures should follow. Word attack skills are tools in learning to read and in becoming a better reader. They are not ends in and of themselves. To be a good reader stresses the ability to comprehend and understand that which has been read.